The Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services

NORTH Bi NORTHWEST

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1992 VOLUME 5, NUMBER 5

An excerpted version of this dialogue first appeared in OUT/LOOK, National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly, Issue 17, Summer 1992. Their yearly subscription rate is $20. For more information, write OUT/LOOK, 540 Castro Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. Reprinted with their permission and expanded upon with permission of the participants.

When *OUT/LOOK* asked "What Do Bisexuals Want?" in our last issue, we received a striking number of responses. Most were letters from bisexuals who felt uncomfortable with the constraints of a "debate" around bisexuality as we had posited it. Our articles also fueled a roundtable discussion between three writer/activists (Amanda Udis-Kessler, Elizabeth Reba Weise and Sarah Murray) which we've excerpted below.

Curiously enough, the last time we received this much mail was in response to Jan Clausen's "My Interesting Condition" (Winter 1990), which our cover trumpeted as "When Lesbians Fall For Men." Tender spot?

Amanda Udis-Kessler: First of all, if we're asking, along with *OUT/LOOK*, "What do bisexuals want?" we need to ask which bisexuals we're talking about.

Elizabeth Reba Weise: . Each individual bisexual presumably wants something different. Each group has a different sense of where a movement - if there exists a movement - or where a community (god knows if there is a community) might be going. I want something specifically from the lesbian community-because that's what we're most often talking about as women speaking about difficulties between lesbians and bisexuals. All I am asking for is an acknowledgement that this is the reality of my life, and that of many women I know. Bi is not about, as Ara Wilson seemed to equate it with, expanding human potential; it's about the reality of some people's lives. You can talk about what this means in theory, or you can talk about what this means in terms of politics, later, but you have to begin with the reality of people's experiences.

Sarah Murray: The question has resonance, of course, because it goes back to Freud asking, many years ago, "What does woman want?" Of course he was utterly incapable of answering that question because he didn't put himself in the position of being a woman; he merely imagined Woman, which is not really the same thing.

Bisexuals want what every human being wants, which is to know the mysteries of life, and to be loved and recognized by others, and to come to know some kind of satisfaction, in whatever ways satisfaction is possible. (While that answer is in some ways disingenuous from a political point of view, I also think there is a great deal of truth in it.)

I'm not a bisexual. I'm a lesbian who comes to a lesbian identity more because it's foisted upon me than because it's something I chose as a political label or as an identity that feels particularly useful to me. Since that lesbian label has always seemed, in many ways, very peripheral to who I am, and only something I am forced to claim because it's made to be important to the society in which I live, the identity of bisexuals has seemed equally unimportant to me in recognizing and acknowledging people I meet in my life, whose experience calls them to claim that label.

I resist the attempts of women who identitify as lesbian-feminists to claim to capture all lesbian experience, and who suggest that bisexual women threaten and endanger lesbians in some way. That has never been my experience.

I'm not interested in being part of a political movement that cannot claim and embrace the full range of human experience, and of human questioning. And if lesbian-feminism can't do that, then I don't want to be a part of it, even though I will always acknowledge my lesbianism in the world, in as honest a way as possible.

Elizabeth: There's no monolithic bisexual anything. Maybe there will be in fifteen years, but maybe there won't. "Bisexual" embraces variant groups of people with such variant senses of who they are.

I've certainly had a strong sense of myself as bisexual in a political context over the years. It comes out of a very specific reaction to the gay and lesbian community, not to the heterosexual community, which is what we're all kind of immersed in and fighting against. For women especially, it comes in opposition to a political lesbian identity that does not allow the ambiguity of desire that bisexuality is, as least in part, about. That's changing though. The emergence of Queer Nation, and the whole notion of "queer" throws a lot of that out the window because it embraces this totality of queerness, everything from transgender folks to straight people who are pagans and

(Continued on page 8)

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Distribution
Printed on recycled paper.

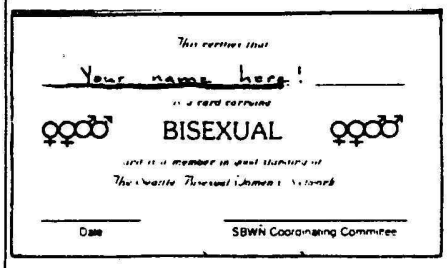
SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of feminists working to create a bisexual support network and to promote equality for bisexual people in both the heterosexual and lesbian/gay communities. We regard ourselves as part of the larger sexual minority community, and consider the fight for lesbian/gay rights to be our own. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political or economic coercion. We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexuality. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. While we work with men on issues of common interest, our group is exclusively female to keep the concerns of women in the forefront of our work.

The discrimination we face as women and as sexual minorities is only one facet of oppression: all bigotry is our enemy. We stand behind the racial and ethnic liberation movements and the struggle for economic equality. However, in any work we do, feminism and the interests of women will be our central concern.

Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, P.O. Box 30645; Greenwood Station Seattle, WA 98103-0645, (206) 783-7987.

Join the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network and become a card-carrying bisexual!



☐ $12 quarterly membership.

☐ $25 Bi-Lover quarterly membership

☐ $100 Bi-Goddess membership

☐ I don't easily fit into a category $___

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We encourage contributions from our readers. Deadline for the next issue: **November 1**

North Bi Northwest is a publication of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services, PO Box 22228, Seattle, WA 98122. (Not for correspondence with SBWN.)

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OUTING NOTES

By Kathleen Bennett

Sixteen women met at the popular vegetarian Bamboo Garden restaurant on Saturday, August 8, for Bi Won Won, the "Bi Women of the Northwest Overnighter." The first group-sponsored social event SBWN has had in a while, it was a well-attended success. A large number of Seattleites were on hand to warmly welcome their sisters from faraway Shelton and Olympia, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, over sizzling plates of salmon-imitating soy products (a secret Buddhist recipe) and long skinny mushrooms. The one dish that didn't get completely devoured was something made with black moss, a "delicacy" that looked a lot like bathtub-drain hair. Brave Roberta was responsible for placing that order, and it gave several of us an opportunity to prove our gastronomic butchness. I won't mention the names of those who chickened out.

After eating, we waited for the fortune cookies, which were not provided because the restaurant has found it impossible to find an egg-free, lard-free cookie supplier. So the resourceful bi women of the Northwest ripped open a paper chopstick wrapper, took out a pen, and wrote our own fortune. As the paper went around the table, each woman wrote a few words and then folded the paper over so that only the last two words of her phrase would be visible to the person who was to continue it. When all sixteen of us were finished, the fortune read as follows:

You will meet a mysterious stranger, having conniptions over his unwillingness to bathe regularly and eat only tofu products. Sleep soundly, remember to always keep yourself and your loved ones out on the lawn, we will dance and cavort in the streets while we talk about the food we ate to distraction and begin to giggle, laugh and join for hours of lustful, languid licking and lapping at limbs but without any hair.

Several went for a postprandial stroll, and another bunch checked out the coffeehouse scene at the Puss Puss Cafe on Pine Street (recommended). Finally, most of us who weren't totally exhausted met at the Broadway dyke dance club Night Mary's to paint the town lavender. Pleasantly wearied, most, unfortunately, missed the Sunday morning brunch at Joan's that was to complete the "over-nighter" concept.▼

From the EDITORS

Dear Readers,

This issue of *NorthBiNorthwest* contains a survey designed to aid us in making this the best bisexual-feminist newsletter around! We realize that you are probably very busy with politcal activities as the election draws near (subliminal hint:"VOTE for CLINTON/GORE and many MORE WOMEN")but this is yet another chance to make your voice heard. After all, what's a community publication without community input, anyway? Thanks!

In addition, remember that we are always in the market for submissions of fiction, poetry, essays, and news tidbits!

Thanks to Peggy especially for her eagle eye copy-editing and Lizbeth's mailing volunteers for their patience with our delays.

See you soon, hopefully in a brighter future!

-Dawn and Erica

B-
Our erotic encounter
the other night
Reminded me of how
We're playmates,
rather than just lovers.

It's been so long...

It was reassuring to see
I still remember
how to do
that middle of the night thing...

Sensory Reminiscence,
not memory.
You still have magic touch.

-P

CORRECTION: The Book Review in our last (August) issue, written by Annemarie Succop,, was of *The Cartoon Guide to Physics*, by Larry Gonick and Art Huffman (1991). The title and author were accidentally omitted by the editors. Many apologies to those who searched frantically through their bookstores!▼

QUOTE: "This [Feminism] is a Socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians." (ooh! gasp!-*eds*) -Rev. Pat Robertson ▼

LETTERS

Dear Wonder-women,

I just read *Closer to Home*.. The whole book was very affiriming. I have sent it East to some of my friends! I would appreciate information regarding your network.

Elizabeth (Weise), your brave creation was a mind-expanding freeing experience.

I thank you!
Sincerely,
Marianne
Corvallis, OR

NEWS

SEVEN EXCITING plenary speakers have been announced for the fifth annual Creating Change conference of the NGLTF Policy Institute, slated this year for November 13-15 in Los Angeles. Creating Change is the country's largest skills-building conference for gay and lesbian political activists and organizations, attracting more than 1,000 participants last year.

The opening address will be given jointly by John Preston and Margaret Cerullo. The second day's plenary will be a panel presentation by Phill Wilson, Valli Kanuha, Angukcuaq (Richard La Fortune) and Odilia Mendez. The final address will be given by Paul Monette.

Creating Change will feature more than 100 workshops addressing critical issues facing the gay and lesbian (and bisexual!) movement. There will be three all-day organizing sessions: Campus Institute (Nov. 11); Diversity Training Institute (Nov. 12); and the People of Color Institute (Nov. 12). Conference fees range from $80-$190 and Pre-Conference Institute fees range from $45-$165. Limited scholarship assistance is available to low-income activists.

For details or a scholarship application, call Catherine Carter, conference coordinator, at NGLTF (202) 332-6483.▼

Former Air Force Lt. Christine Traxler says it was bad enough losing her job when she revealed she is bisexual. She says it got worse when she was branded a security risk and stuck with an $18,000 school bill.

"It's amazing to me the military still treats homosexuals like criminals," said Traxler, who received an honorable discharge in April. "One day, I'm doing a wonderful job. The next day, I can't be trusted."

Traxler, 26, told the Spokesman-Review that she was sick of the lie she was living and informed her commanding officer six months earlier she was bisexual. She was branded a security risk, discharged, and ordered to pay an $18,000 bill for her Air Force Academy education.

Traxler, who served four years at Fairchild Air Force Base, is now working for the National Abortion Rights Action League in Spokane. (from an Associated Press release)▼

THE COURAGE TO HEAL: Working with Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse

A Basic, Non-clinical Program for Helping Professionals by Ellen Bass, M.A. will be held December 3, at the Red Lion Hotel/Columbia River in Portland, OR, and December 5, at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue in Bellevue, WA. Through powerful trainings combining lecture, live demonstrations, role plays, and experiential writing exercises, Ellen illustrates effective techniques in working with adult survivors. Psychologists, counselors, medical professionals, social workers, clergy, and other helping professionals can benefit from this one day program. In addition, the program is approved for continuing education credits by various professional agencies. For reservations and fee information, please contact Branching Out Productions at (317) 637-2906.▼

The Women's Center of North Seattle Community College is sponsoring a Fall Quarter Lecture Series entitled: "Increasing Personal Power: The New Woman in Politics" to be held Wednesdays from 12-1:30 p.m. This series encourages you to redefine politics by naming your own issues and by learning how to become "responseable" to those issues. All lectures are held in the Student Events Center unless otherwise noted. Please contact the Women's Center for more information on these and other programs at (206)527-3696.

Oct. 7-Discrimination in the Army Dr. Margarethe Cammermeyer discusses her recent discharge from the military after telling investigators she was a lesbian.

Oct. 14-Women at the Earth Summit Three women share their experiences attending the Earth Summit last June; they discuss the hopeful aspects of the conference and where we need to go from here.

Oct. 21-Winning with Women Sharon Tomiko Miyake, chairwoman of the King County Women's Political Caucus explains how women can affect the issues they care about and where they can invest their time, passion and energy to help record numbers of women get elected to office.

Oct.28-Getting Involved in Citizen Activism Members of the Board from the League of Women Voters of Seattle will discuss current government issues and how the League educates on and participates in those issues.

Nov. 4-Gray Panthers-A Political Movement Margaret Lueders, chairwoman of the Seattle Gray Panthers, discusses the key issues the Panthers are currently involved in.

Nov.11-Refugee Women Speak Out Board and staff members from the Refugee Women's Alliance of Seattle give a brief overview of refugee and immigrant populations in the Seattle area and the barriers to services faced by these women.

Nov.18-Time for a Change-Involving Women and People of Color in the Political Process Dawn Mason, Democratic candidate for State Representative for the 37th District, tells her personal story about how she became involved in politics; the need for gender equity and the importance of bringing the woman's perspective into the political process. (Room CC2358)

Nov.25-lecture TBA

Dec.2-Anita Hill Speaks Out in Seattle-Video A second chance to view Anita Hill's dynamic address given last June at the Trial Lawyer's Association luncheon.

Dec.9-Finding Your Own Political Voice A panel of students share their stories about how they found their political voice. Members of the audience are invited to bring issues to the session to brainstorm ways to respond to those issues. (Room CC2358)▼

The annual Bi-Thanksgiving Dinner is tentatively planned for Saturday, November 28 around 2pm. All those interested from SBWN, SBMU, and Bi-Net (and families, of course!) are invited to attend, but please be sure to check the bi-phone for the final plans and place.▼

News

A bi-monthly newsletter for survivors of female incest began publication in September 1992. SOFIE, Survivors of Female Incest Emerge, is for men and women who were sexually abused as children by their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, or other significant women in their lives. "I believe we are an unheard of segment of society," writes the Editor/Publisher, Karen K., "Women do sexually abuse children. We need to be heard. In my own recovery I have felt very alone because I haven't been able to find others like me." SOFIE welcomes all correspondence, and as many letters, articles, stories and artwork will be printed as possible. A one year subscription (6 bi-monthly issues) is $30.00 (US). All other countries, $36.00 in US funds. You need not subscribe to correspond. Please indicate whether or not you want your name published or if you would like a personal response. Write to:

SOFIE
PO Box 2794
Renton, WA 98056-2794▼

A celebration of Fall-n-Womyn, A dance for women, will be held Saturday, October 3, 1992, 8:00 p.m.-1:00 am at the South Park Community Center, 4851 South Tacoma Way, Tacoma, WA. Tickets are $7.00 in advance, $8 at the door. Tickets are available at Imprints in Tacoma, Wild Rose in Seattle, Smithfield Cafe in Olympia. Questions call 472-0422. Must be 21 or over to attend.▼

The Northwest AIDS Foundation is sponsoring a Community Forum on Women and AIDS: Access to Prevention, Education, and Care on Monday October 26, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 509 10th Ave E (at Broadway). The Forum is designed to highlight existing women-specific education and care programs, encourage audience participation and input, and elicit concrete ideas for what can be done to improve future services for women. For more information call 329-6923, ext. 254.▼

Bisexual Connection is conducting a survey of Bisexuals in open, committed relationships with the intentions of developing a study of these relationships and eventually to publish a book on the subject, focusing on people's own descriptions of their relationships. "For us," they write, "part of the experience of being bisexual is being involved in an open , committed relationship. We feel that our choice of this sort of relationship is strongly influenced and shaped by our sexuality. We would like to find out how other bisexuals involved in open, committed relationships feel about their choice, and about its connection with their sexuality." Surveys are available at SBWN and BiNet meetings, or by writing:

BiSurvey c/o Bisexual Connection
P.O. Box 13158
Minneapolis, MN 55414▼

MATERIAL NEEDED for an anthology on" Body Image and Identity in the Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Community (ies). The book will explore the ways in which our communities both challenge and perpetuate society's beauty standard.

Suggested word length for articles and non-fiction narratives is 700-2500 words. Some poetry considered. Tentative publication date is Fall '93. Submissions and/or queries should be sent to : Dawn Atkins, P.O. Box 934, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-0934. Deadline is December 31, 1992.▼

Are you MONOGAMOUS? NO?! Well, we've got a party for you! If you,your partner, or your fantasies are non-monogamous or polyfidelitous, come join us Saturday, October 24, from 7-10p.m. We're having a potluck, support-building, non-sexual, people-mixer party.

Call the bi-phones (783-7987 or 720-4506) for details.▼

SEATTLE PREMIER!

The Twin Bracelets, a remarkable film written and directed by women, is a deeply moving and tragic portrayal of one woman's struggle for independence and for the love of another woman. Hui-hua (Chen Te Jung) is a rebellious teenager of a Chinese minority tribe, growing up during the '80's,in a fishing village where people have no concept of human rights, women's liberation, lesbian love or even divorce. While our heroine is confronted with the daily oppression of the ancient traditions, she seeks love and escape in the arms of her childhood buddy, Hsiu (Liu Hsiao Hui).

This beautiful film was the audience favorite at the San Francisco FilmFestival. The two week engagement at the Grand Illusion (50th and University Wy NE) begins Friday, September 25. Call 523-3935 for showtimes.▼

LRC AUCTION-The Lesbian Resource Center invites you to attend its second annual auction on Saturday, October 24, 1992, at the Unity Church, 200 Eighth Avenue North, Seattle, at 6 p.m. This year's theme is *Home is Where Your Heart Is*.

The programs of the LRC, a feminist, multi-service, nonprofit organization, currently serve over 120,000 women and men every year; this second auction is dedicated to expanding these services. Radio personality Sandy Bradley will auction off approximately $25,000 worth of exciting items, creative opportunities and valuable services.

Admission is $9 and hors d'oeuvres, regional wines and non-alcoholic beverages will be catered. Please RSVP by calling 322-3953.▼

Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities is seeking volunteers available daytimes and evenings, Mondays through Fridays to staff a telephone line to respond to persons from sexual minority communities. 56 hour of training is required, no experience is necessary. To sign up for a group interview, call SCSSM at 282-9314.▼

READER SURVEY

Faithful readers, your editors are in a quandry as to what to focus on in future issues of *NorthBiNorthwest*. So we decided to get you to tell us what YOU want to see in these pages rather than leaving you to suffer the whims of editorial decision-making. Lets hear it for democracy in action! Please use additional sheets if necessary and return by December 1 to:

SBWN, P.O. Box 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle, WA 98103-0645

Please discuss how you feel about the topics, authors, format etc. when answering the following:
What do you like/dislike about the News section?

What do you like/dislike about the Features section?

What do you like/dislike about the Arts/Reviews section?

What do you like/dislike about the Meeting Notes section?

What kinds of topics would you like to see covered in our Features section?
On a related topic, what about political coverage-more, less or what?

Would you be interested in a (semi-)regular Opinion column?
Would you be interested in a (semi-)regular Advice column?
Would you be interested in a (semi-)regular Erotica column?
Any others, such as Classifieds or Personals?

How do you like the layout or presentation of *NorthBiNorthwest*? Any suggestions for improvement?

What do you like about *NorthBiNorthwest* the most?

What do you like about *NorthBiNorthwest* the least?

How does it compare with other bi community/feminist newsletters you see or receive?

Now, for a few questions about you just so we have a better idea of our audience! (optional)
Gender:
Age:
Education/Occupation:
How did you find out about *NorthBiNorthwest?*

NEWS

From *OUT/LOOK* magazine to CNN, everyone wants to know: What Do Bisexuals Want?

What do you think we want? Anything different from what you want? We doubt it. We're fed up with being set up. We're fed up with rhetorical bi-baiting questions and ignorant assumptions. We're fed up with fearful responses to our coming out and articulating our identity and politics and with being ridiculed with "The Bisexual Question" or "What do Bi's Want?" Framing it in such a way evokes those old patriarchs Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx, who knew full well what women wanted. They also knew why they posed it that way. This is similar to another infamous socialist turn-of-phrase, "The Black Question." There is no question about including all women or all Blacks. It's men's hegemony and White behavior we should focus on. So we address the question back to you: "Why are you so threatened by our coming out among you?" And, " How can we get through it and fight for a world free of homophobia, woman-hatred, racism, and AIDS so we're all free to love as we please?"

We're fed up with being set-up with comments like from the last 1993 March on Washington organizing meeting that "we're ready for bi's maybe, but not transgender people," and with recent headlines like this from *Gay Community News*: "93 March on D.C. To Include Bi's, But Not Disabled," that pit groups against each other rather than unify. The April '93 March on Washington for Lesbian/Gay Bi Equal Rights and Liberation, with its 50% racial/gender parity is catalyzing a new revolutionary inclusionary process in our movement; in our community. This process is to be praised and encouraged, not ridiculed! And we're all only temporarily able-bodied, remember. Disabled people are bi too, transgender people are lesbian, gay and bi. We all need support and deserve inclusion. We need to march together in all our glorious diversity to defend our rights in '93! (There will be more attempts to divide us; you can be sure.)

We're fed up with being set-up. The Lambda Book Award (the Lammys) do not have any catagories for books that embrace women's and men's issues jointly- whether they be bi or otherwise. The result is that books like *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak OUT* (nominated this year for a Lammy) get stuck in inappropriate categories like the "Lesbian Anthologies" one they put it in. This not only pits us against lesbian writers and confuses the issue of lesbian space (which we support and defend), it is also inappropriate. *Bi Any Other Name* includes stories by men. The result: already tense relations between lesbians and bi's are exacerbated (one judge has withdrawn), rather than creating a situation where there is enough space for all; enough catagories to express all our diversity.

Let us create enough awards, categories, opportunities and encouragement for everyone to flourish and shine. We can do it. We deserve it. We owe ourselves nothing less.

-message on a flyer composed by Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu with help from Elias Farajaje-Jones, Robin Ochs, and Carol Queen: Distributed to participants at the OUT/WRITE 92 Conference in Boston▼

FORUM ON QUEER PAGANISM- Saturday, October 24, 7:30 p.m. $3-5 suggested donation at the Crossroads Learning Center. Is there something unique about being Queer and Pagan? Some folks think so! Come hear a diverse panel of lesbian/bisexual/gay/transgendered people speak about their personal paths of Spirituality, ranging from Feminist Witchcraft to S/M Sex Magic, from Native American Medicine to European Wicca, from Radical Faerie to Transmagic...and more!! The evening will be recorded for possible publication. Call the Crossroads Learning Center at 325-8790 for more information.▼

UNITED WAY UPDATE

by Peggy Walsh

Final input has gone to United Way of King County's funding/decision-making body, enhanced a bit by input from representatives of tweny sexual minority organizations via our liason, Donna Eagle.

United Way funding to Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual communities is extremely low compared to other special populations and mainstream communities and agencies. We recommended that United Way provide in-house training in cultural sensitivity so they can be more effective with advertising, outreach, and service provision for sexual minorities as a designated separate special population

Also suggested were support of anti-harassment legislation, support of basic civil rights, and more visibility (safety) within United Way itself (currently with one out gay person among 85 employees). United Way asks for demographic information and capacity plans of its member organizations; they should explicitly include "sexual minority" as a category. This concept may be scary at first, but it is useful in the long-run to show that we really are everywhere! We also want to seesee that groups that exclude certain populations (such as the Boy Scouts' refusal to accept gay members or leaders) are held accountable when funding decisions are made.

Further, we addressed all of United Way's standard fields of service:

Basic Needs: to provide meeting/office space, community center, protection from gay-bashing, and support-group funding;

Health: focus on lesbian's and women of color's access to health care, male/male rape, substance abuse, and mental health support;

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BI RESPONSE

(Continued from page 1)

everything in between. You have a bunch of 23-year olds who say, "We're here, we're queer," and they're not talking about being bi or gay or lesbian.

Sarah: I think that radical sexuality is, in many ways, radical politics in this country now. If you're not a person of color, for whom other communities exist which continue to nurture political analyses of society and keep alive sociological and political rather than psychological analyses of how individuals get to be who and where they are, then alternative sexual communities is where it's at. And partly because of the ways in which they have sponsored and created analyses of gender as a social construct that have allowed many people to understand who they are as a function of the kinds of societies that we've grown up in, not merely of their own personal choices.

It's also very important to remember that not all lesbians have been or are drawn to the lesbian communities. Equally, many women who view themselves as bisexual *have* been drawn to the lesbian communities, and have put a great deal of energy into building up those communities. I speak as a lesbian who was not attracted to the formal lesbian ccommunity, because of some of the rigidities I saw in it. I tend to resent people who suggest they can represent my point of view and know who I am simply because they know how I label my sexual practices.

The second point to note is that bisexuality is not problematic for most of the generation under 25 with whom I've come into contact. I met over 100 young activists when I worked as a reporter for the San Francisco *Sentinel*. Their attitudes recall the early post-Stonewall days, when there were many people who assumed bisexuality to be a natural thing rather than problematic. It really is a particular historical moment, and a rather narrowly framed one, of the seventies and early eighties, when bisexuality was marked as deviant and destructive and bisexuals were labled spoilers of the lesbian and gay community.

Amanda: And that's exactly when the identity became so important to so many people who identify as bisexual now. It's exactly when the movement, to the extent that it is a movement, took off.

Elizabeth: When I read Wilson'sessay in *OUT/LOOK*, several things frustrated me, though I immediately recognized her point of view. It was the same point of view we ran into a few years ago at the Northwest Lesbian Conference. It took literally years to organize, and there were meetings every week, meetings which I and women from the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network attended. Here was this conference being organized to discuss lesbian issues, and here were a bunch of women who identified as bisexual who were involved in organizing the conference. Some of us wrote up a proposal for a workshop on lesbian-bisexual dialogue. It wasn't a big deal until it got to the group as a whole. People freaked out that bisexual women wanted to invade lesbian space, though all we wanted to do was give one workshop, and, in fact, many of us were indistinguishable from the lesbians in that group in our politics and lives. In the end, we were called up by the organizing committee of the conference and told that we would be allowed to give our workshop if we could find a lesbian who would sit on the panel, presumably to act as a kind of chaperone to make sure that we wouldn't do anything untoward. So we had to get a lesbian, a known lesbian. What was so funny was that some of the lesbians who were willing to be our tokens turned out to have been with men much more recently than had most of us who were going to be on the panel. Clearly the divisions were a little murky.

And then at the conference,we get the programs. And there's our workshop, "What are they doing here? A lesbian-bisexual dialogue" with our names. And we notice that there are little asterisks next to our names. And we look down at the bottom of the page, and there's this little asterisk, and it says: "KNOWN NON-LESBIAN PRESENTER."

Amanda: That's what frustrates me so much about this notion of invasion, becasue for most women for whom their bisexual identity is important to them, it's not an issue of invasion. These are not people coming in from the outside. What this is is about the taking on of a label. It's an attempt to acknowledege a certain kind of reality and make it a visible and open reality.

Sarah: Perhaps part of what is happening is that feminism no longer seems such an endangered possibility that it has to be defended through policing sexual borders. And, in a way, it seems to me a sign of the strength of feminism as an interpretation of Western history and contemporary Western experience that it can admit openly within it the discussion of women who find themselves uncertain about their sexual identities, uncertain about their gender identities, and uncertain about what the meanings of those are for their own poltical practice and philosophy.

Elizabeth: The argument it always comes down to at parties is: Is being a lesbian about being attracted to or falling in love with women, or is it about not being attracted to and falling in love with, or at least getting involved with, men?

Amanda: Or at least not sleeping with them..

Elizabeth: It's hard to get wrought up over this after so many years, but the reality is that it's not the outside coming in, it's the inside letting down some of the barriers. You've got Rita Mae Brown, Jan Clausen, Jill Johnston, Holly Near, June Jordan, pillars of the lesbian community, who all turned out to be bisexual, however they choose to define themselves.

Elizabeth: It comes down to this notion of the politics of scarcity. We're not taking bread out of the mouths of lesbians. Women who ten years ago would have been lesbian are now showing a little more of the

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BI RESPONSE

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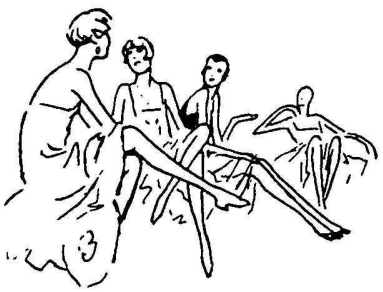
reality of their lives. It's not that there is this citadel of free space for women who choose only women to live within, but it's all these women who are out there in the world, whose reality covers myriad different lives. I came out at work through the book *Closer to Home*, which was pretty difficult to do because no one knows what it means when you come out as bisexual.

Amanda: Is this a zero-sum game? Do lesbians lose if bisexuals win? What does it mean for us to say we're not taking bread from the mouths of lesbians? I think there are two reasons why the game looks like it's zero sum. On a historical level there certainly are changes in politically popular thinking. Lesbians are more invisible now, at least certain lesbians within lesbian-feminist mono-culture. There have been real cultural shifts away from seventies values. Women who were really active then are tired now. That kind of purity is hard to live out. Jan Clausen makes some really good points in her article "My Interesting Condition." She says, "The truth is that the lesbian feminist way of life I knew was very hard on women, yet we were not supposed to notice or complain about that fact. We were supposed to content ourselves with our elect status and the glory of our exhausting service." She mentions a number of examples. "Of course, all of this happened in a context of oppression. I'm not saying we simply did it to ourselves. Yet I wish we could have been gentler with each other and more honest about how hard and sometimes disillusioning it was." That point has really haunted me for a long time.

Elizabeth: Like all of thse systems of political thought that don't allow for the complexity that is people's lives. The bisexual movement may have started out as people trying to replicate the lesbian-feminist movement, but if there's any bit of hope in what it might be about, it's an attempt to acknowledge and make space for how actually complex ourlives are, and how we might go about looking at that complexity, and trying to make sense of it. And I think it is about trying to lead a moral life at the same time as one is acknowledging quite how diverse our experience and our lives actually are.

Sarah: There are places where it's appropriate and reasonable to have lesbian-only space. It's important that there be spaces where women who identify as lesbians feel they can work together and do what they need to do, and feel that they don't have to deal with issues arising from heterosexual relationships, if they don't want to. I don't think that there are very many bisexuals active in formulating bisexual politics who would oppose that. So many of them were, or still are, members of "lesbian" communities. Not only are bis not taking bread out of the mouths of lesbians, but many bi women are women who actively create and support lesbian communities.



But it's disingenuous for any lesbian to discount bisexuals' feelings of disenfranchisement and suppression from lesbians by pointing to the lack of lesbian power in large-scale institutions. The reality is that lesbians do have the power, as do all people, to make others feel uncomfortable and controlled in group interactions. It certainly is a power of a different order if you're not connected to large-scale institutions, but it's not an insignificant power, and to feel that power being excercised is not an insignificant experience. And since feminism is something that has tried to admit the importance of an emotional connection to the world, and of the importance between the personal and the political, I think it's very hypocritical to deny the power of the feelings bisexual women have and bring to feminism. It's very important that there be space to incorporate that into a stronger and more profound understanding of the female experience.

UNITED WAY

(Continued from page 7)

Family Support: support of non-traditional family/parenting units, domestic violence shelters;

Youth Services: as most United Way money is spent on adult needs, it would seem that if children are targeted at an early age, they will be less likely to become the adults that need these services. Needed are role models/mentoring, school-based programs that address issues of sexual orientation for children and their parents who are gay, safe foster care, and suicide intervention;

Specialized Youth: many 18-24 year-olds living on their own are functionally children who may be distracted by sexuality issues and coping with adult needs. Housing, clothing, job/education counseling are needed, especially since local street-kid shelters are seen as homophobic by the as much as 40% of youth-out-of-home who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay;

Ageing: widow(er) support, acceptance in nursing homes, loss of family/family-of-choice not acknowledged;

Disabled: access to agencies and programs.

In addition, there is a great need for diversity awareness, both along traditional lines such as racila/ethnic and gender, as well as recognizing non-traditional subpopulations. For instance, bisexuals in opposite-sex realtionships are not de facto heterosexual and still suffer discrimination and marginalization. Straight or gay/lesbian partners of bisexuals may need support. And, transexuals fleeing domestic violence situations cannot get shelter because their genitals do not match their lives.

The United Way, via Ms. Eagle, has asked us for volunteers and community role-models such as high-level influential people to be "out" and positively influence their employers and the community at large. Finally, we discussed a consortium, possibly with United Way financial support, of lesbian/gay/bisexual agencies to provide a better sense of cohesion to the communnity and to better coordinate services.▼

Calendar

Please note that topics can be tentative. Call the bi-phone at 783-7987 to check.
For men's events, call the Seattle Bisexual Men's Union at 720-4506.
For information about BiNet events call 720-4506

OCT 1 *BiOUT Speaker's bureau potluck and planning, 6:30pm

OCT 2 *BiNet monthly meeting, 7pm

OCT 5 SBWN Newcomer's group, 7:15pm

OCT 11 *NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY!!

OCT 11 SBWN Check-in meeting and Coordinating Committee elections, 6pm

OCT 11 SBMU Topic night: Bisexuality in a Multicultural Perspective, 7pm

OCT 13 SBWN Phone answered - LIVE from 7-9pm

OCT 19 SBWN Newcomer's group, 7:15pm

OCT 24* BiNet Polyfidelity Potluck, Discussion and Party

OCT 25 SBWN Topic night: Safer Sex, 6pm

NOV 2 SBWN Newcomer's group, 7:15pm

NOV 3* ELECTION DAY!!!

NOV 8 SBWN Check-in meeting, 6pm

NOV 8 SBMU Topic night: Children and Families, 7pm

NOV 10 SBWN phone answered LIVE from 7-9 pm

NOV 13* BiNet monthly meeting, 7pm

NOV 16 SBWN Newcomer's group, 7:15pm

NOV 17 SBWN phone answered LIVE from 7-9 pm

NOV 22 SBWN Topic night: Feminism, 6pm

NOV 30 SBWN Newcomer's group, 7:15 pm

DEC 6 SBWN Check-in meeting, 6pm

DEC 8 SBWN phone answered LIVE from 7-9pm

DEC 11* BiNet monthly meeting, 7pm

DEC 13 SBMU Topic night: Massage, 7pm

DEC 14 SBWN Newcomer's group, 7:15pm

*DENOTES MIXED-GENDER EVENTS

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